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Reagan Urges a 'No Nonsense' Latin Approach

By GEORGE SKELTON,
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WASHINGTON—President Reagan called Tuesday for a "no nonsense" approach to protecting U.S. vital interests in Central America, where he charged that the Soviet Union is trying "to change the strategic balance of the world" by creating "a string of anti-American, Soviet-style dictatorships."

Reagan chose the forum of a luncheon speech to a National Hispanic Leadership Conference to speak out in defense of his Central America policy and to try to increase public support for his controversial actions.

'Time to Defend Freedom'

Referring to the bitter debate being waged in Congress over funds for the Salvadoran government and for anti-Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua. Reagan—borrowing from Abraham Lincoln—declared: "There's still time to defend freedom. But to do so, we can't stand as a house divided against itself."

The President added: "We must recognize our common values. We must take a no nonsense approach to protecting our vital interests."

Congress adjourned for an Easter recess last Friday without approv-

ing Reagan's requests for $21 million for the Nicaraguan rebels and $62 million for the Salvadoran army. In the case of El Salvador, however, the President temporarily bypassed Congress by invoking emergency powers to provide ammunition, other military supplies and medical equipment. He was legally prohibited from providing more money for the guerrillas, who are backed by the CIA.

Congress reacted negatively to the covert-aid request after it was disclosed that the CIA had directed the mining of Nicaragua's harbors by anti-Sandinista commandos. A White House deputy press secretary, Robert Sims, who specializes in national security issues, said Tuesday that the Nicaraguan guerrilla operations were "done with full warning in advance that mines had been placed." He added that "no lives were lost."

No Confirmation of Secrets

Sims' comments came after the principal White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, read a long statement on terrorism, which declared in part that "when we are victimized by acts of terrorism, we have the right to defend ourselves—and the right to help others do the same." Neither Speakes nor any other Administration official would publicly confirm that Reagan—as reported in The Times on Sunday—had signed a policy directive endorsing the principle of preemptive strikes and reprisal raids against terrorists.

"We don't confirm classified national security directives," Speakes

repeatedly insisted. But the presidential action has been widely confirmed privately by Administration sources who refuse to be further identified.

The statement on terrorism, spelling out the broad outlines of American policy in response to requests for comment on The Times story, declared that "the toll of bombings, assassinations and kidnapings bears terrible witness to the indiscriminate attacks (by) terrorist groups. . . . We have, in the course of a detailed review, reached some conclusions on what we must do to protect ourselves and to assist others in protecting themselves. . . .

Reagan Blames Soviets

"First, no nation can condone international terrorism. Second, it is the right of every legitimate government to resist the use of terrorism against its people, institutions or property by all legal means available. Third, terrorism is a problem for all nations, and this government will work as closely as possible with other governments—particularly other similarly threatened democracies—to deal with it."

The statement added, "The states that practice terrorism or actively support it cannot be allowed to do so without consequence."

In his remarks to the 150 Latino leaders, Reagan made it clear that he believes the Soviet Union is principally to blame for leftist revolution in Central America. "A faraway, totalitarian power is committing enormous resources to change the strategic balance of the world by turning Central America into a